

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Cochairs of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board and Senior Members of the Intelligence Community

October 28, 2009

The President. Thank you, everybody. Today I am proud to announce the newest members of my national security team. I just met with them in the Oval Office, and I'm very pleased to have two extraordinary Americans. Senators Chuck Hagel and David Boren have agreed to serve as Cochairmen of my Intelligence Advisory Board, otherwise known as PIAB.

Now, since Dwight Eisenhower, Presidents have relied on the advisory board for advice on intelligence matters, and under Chuck and Dave's leadership, I will be looking for the board to provide me with objective, independent, and nonpartisan counsel as we work to strengthen our intelligence community and our national security.

And that's why we're joined today by my DNI, Director of National Intelligence, Denny Blair, and leaders from all 16 of our agencies involved with intelligence gathering. They represent countless men and women, uniformed and civilian, who work, often in obscurity, to keep our country safe.

Now, in recent months, we've seen some of their successes, in partnership with law enforcement and homeland security, real progress against Al Qaida and its extremist allies. And we thank those behind these suggestion—these successes, and we pledge to continue to provide the utmost support to them. Having Chuck Hagel and Dave Boren next to me, I think, is going to help us do an even better job.

Chuck understands that accurate and timely intelligence is essential for effective foreign policy. He served for many years as—on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and 6 years on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. And I came to appreciate his sound judgments in our travels together overseas, including to Iraq and Afghanistan.

He also understands, from personal experience, the need to protect our troops and provide them with the best possible intelligence. During Vietnam, Sergeant Hagel served as an infantry squad leader, along with his brother, where they both were wounded twice. And I thank Chuck for his lifetime of service and his willingness to serve once again.

David is a longtime champion of intelligence reform. He was the longest serving chairman in the history of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. In that time, he authored the legislation that created an independent inspector general at the CIA and major reforms to our oversight of covert actions.

David was also the leading force behind legislation that has encouraged thousands of American college students to study abroad to deepen their knowledge of the world and cultures. And I thank David for agreeing to serve in this capacity, even as he continues to lead the University of Oklahoma. And we are sorry about Bradford's shoulder.

Senator David Boren. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Thank you, sir.

The President. I look forward to working with Chuck and David in their new roles. They will report to me, they will have my full support, and they will have the full cooperation of my National Security Council staff and the organizations represented here.

We are off to a good start with this meeting by welcoming the press, which past advisory boards have rarely done. Now, that's a reflection of my administration's commitment to transparency and open government, even, when appropriate, on matters of national security and intelligence.

In the near future, I'll be naming additional members to the board. I look forward to Chuck, David, and these men and women around the table for their candid and unvarnished advice on the quality and accuracy of our intelligence and the effectiveness of our intelligence community.

Our work is clear. The organizations represented here have made real progress in recent years. But we all agree that more needs to be done to improve the collection of intelligence, to ensure that analysis reaches senior decisionmakers in a timely way, and to provide strong oversight to ensure that our intelligence activities are consistent with our democratic values and with the rule of law.

And the American people—and the men and women of our intelligence community as well—deserve nothing less. As I've said in my recent visits to the National Counterterrorism Center and the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we are extraordinarily grateful to them for the hard work, without any fanfare, that they do to keep the American people safe.

That's what I'm committed to doing as President, and that's why I want to again thank Senators Hagel and Boren for agreeing to serve in this capacity. I think they are going to be a invaluable resource to all of us sitting around the table.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Hagel, brother of Cochairman Hagel; and Sam Bradford, quarterback, University of Oklahoma Sooners.

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